

Can 'coin-card' collecting bring new blood to hobby?

By Roger Boye

A New York company wants to attract "new blood" to coin collecting by issuing some controversial "coin cards" that contain precious metals.

"We're pioneering a completely new medium in numismatics," said Luis Vigdor, president of Powell Associates, which will distribute the cards. "It is really our hope that many others will be introduced to the wonders of coin collecting through these cards."

Vigdor spoke in Dallas at the early spring convention of the American Numismatic Association, the nation's largest organization of coin collectors with about 31,000 members. The ANA Board of Governors voted last year to allow Vigdor to use the ANA's name and logo on the cards.

Among other things, Vigdor will pay the ANA royalties and provide the ANA with plastic-laminated cardboard versions of each coin card, which the ANA will give to youngsters.

The ANA's involvement in Vigdor's project has sparked a debate within the hobby, with a prominent California dealer saying in a letter to Coin

World that he was "shocked and dismayed."

"At a time when baseball cards are luring increasing numbers of potential young numismatists away from the hobby, how can the ANA support such a venture so contradictory to its philosophy?" wrote Ira M. Goldberg, an owner of Superior Stamp and Coin Co., Inc., of Beverly Hills.

"Although it may benefit the ANA financially in the short run, in the long run it will damage the hobby and further alienate young collectors from numismatics."

New York dealer Harvey Stack of Stack's had some reservations about the idea, but other hobbyists noted that sports cards have attracted legions of enthusiasts and that coin cards also might capture the public's fancy, fostering more coin collectors.

Meanwhile, sponsors of several annual coin shows have been debating whether to permit sports-card dealers to sell their wares at the shows. Earlier this year, for example, the Florida United Numismatists added a sports-card section to its show for the first time to increase attendance.